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ABSTRACT

The phenomenon of transfer shock has been cited in the literature to refer to students' tendency to receive lower course grades at the four-year institution than at the two-year college, especially in the first and second terms of residency. Records of 331 former Ohio State University, Lima (OSU Lima) students were analyzed to determine the presence or absence of academic transfer shock following a change of enrollment from the two-year regional campus to the central campus of the University (OSU Columbus). Autumn quarter matriculants of 1974, 1976, and 1978 were selected for the study, and findings regarding their academic persistence, American College Testing program (ACT) scores, and grade point averages (GPA's) were compared with findings from similar studies conducted in 1968 and 1972. The study revealed that a higher percentage of students changing to the OSU Columbus re-enrolled for a second quarter than had been the case earlier--a 24% attrition rate was observed in 1972, compared to an 8% attrition rate in 1981. Students' ACT scores appeared to be related to the presence of grade depression upon change of campus, as well as to students' tendency to change to and continue at the central campus. Additionally, the study revealed that grade depression was significant only for the group of 1974 matriculants, whose overall GPA decreased from 2.94 at OSU Lima to 2.78 at OSU Columbus. (Author/AYC)

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OSU The Ohio State University at Lima

A STUDY OF THE ACADEMIC SUCCESS OF STUDENTS CHANGING FROM A REGIONAL CAMPUS TO THE CENTRAL CAMPUS OF THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

Self-Study Report No. 6

Institutional Research Series 1981

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September, 1981

VC 830 037

A STUDY OF THE ACADEMIC SUCCESS OF STUDENTS CHANGING
FROM A REGIONAL CAMPUS TO THE CENTRAL CAMPUS OF
THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

The Ohio State University at Lima is an integral part of The Ohio State University. Students are admitted to the campus through the mechanism of a central office of admissions on the Columbus campus. Faculty members are appointed with the approval of departments of instruction of the university. As a result of these practices and the general policies of Ohio State, students may change campus of enrollment with considerable ease.

To change from OSU Lima to OSU Columbus, for example, simply involves filling out two short form, one to change campus and one to request registration materials for the new campus. This process applies to all students, even those on academic warning or probation, however a change to the central campus normally would not be recommended to a student already in academic difficulty.

In the past the integration of regional campus students into the total registration and records system of the university created significant records retrieval problems in conducting follow-up studies of former regional campus students. Until rather recently, such studies required a considerable extent of manual searching and duplicating of records. With the implementation of a more sophisticated student information system, tracking students who change campuses has been greatly facilitated in the past few years.

Background

Transfer Shock Phenomenon. The phenonemon of transfer shock has been cited in the literature of higher education to describe what appears to be a common situation among many students who transfer from a junior or community college to a four year college or university. As a group such students tend to receive lower course grades at the four year institution, especially in the first and second terms of residence.

A study conducted at The Ohio State University more than thirteen years ago (Brewer, 1968) revealed the presence of academic transfer shock among students changing from branch campuses to the main campus of The Ohio State University. Brewer cites the presence of transfer shock in the first quarter of residence on the central campus. It should be pointed out, however, that the branch students represented in her study had attended academic centers, evening schools located in high schools, rather than being enrolled on university campuses. At Lima, The Ohio State University Academic Center operated from Autumn Quarter 1960 through Spring Quarter 1966. Beginning Autumn Quarter 1966, a permanent Ohio State University campus was opened.

A study by Zimmerman (1972) revealed no evidence of academic transfer shock among a random sample of students who had transferred from OSU Lima to the Columbus campus and who had begun their Ohio State studies in the Autumn Quarters of 1967, 1968, and 1969. For the students who transferred to Columbus and remained there for at least one quarter, a comparison between the cumulative point hour ratio of the Lima campus course work (2.60) and the first quarter course work at the central campus (2.65) revealed little difference. Similar findings were reported for students who left the Lima campus and attended the Columbus campus for at least two quarters. In this case, the Lima cumulative point hour average was 2.64 while the Columbus campus second quarter cumulative point hour average also was 2.64.

Procedures and Findings

The present study was undertaken to secure the same types of data as those obtained in the 1972 study of students who began their collegiate work at OSU Lima before changing to the Columbus campus. The improved student data system simplified greatly the replication of the 1972 study and made possible an investigation of the entire population of students who had begun studies at OSU Lima in one of three Autumn Quarters.

Students selected for the study entered OSU Lima in the Autumn Quarters of 1974, 1976, and 1978. A total of 331 students changed to the Columbus campus and remained there at least one quarter and 311 changed to the Columbus campus and remained there at least two quarters. This finding appears to differ significantly from that of the 1972 study. Approximately 24 percent of the students transferring to the Columbus campus in the earlier study failed to stay on the central campus for more than one quarter. In contrast, only six percent of the students in the present study failed to enroll on the Columbus campus for at least a second quarter.

An analysis of the data for the students who first entered OSU Lima in 1974, 1976, and 1978 reveals some slight depression of point hour averages for the overall groups (Tables 1 and 2). The observed changes are not great enough to be categorized as evidence of transfer shock, however.

For the total groups who transferred to Columbus and remained on the central campus for at least one quarter there was a decrease of approximately two tenths of a point in the Columbus campus first quarter point hour average as compared with the final Lima campus cumulative point hour average (Lima CPHR-2.79; Columbus first quarter QPHR-2.61). Students who transferred to Columbus and remained for at least two quarters also had a second quarter point hour average only two tenths of a point lower than the final

TABLE 1

COMPARATIVE DATA FOR STUDENTS WHO FIRST ENROLLED AT LIMA AND THEN ENROLLED AT COLUMBUS FOR AT LEAST ONE QUARTER

Group	N	At Lima			At Columbus		
		Points	Hours	CPHR	Points	Hours	QPHR*
Autumn 1974	112	23,823	8,213	2.90	4,030	1,499	2.24
Autumn 1976	105	19,746	7,117	2.77	4,117	1,522	2.70
Autumn 1978	114	16,856	6,330	2.66	3,688	1,514	2.44
TOTALS	331	60,425	21,660	2.79	11,835	4,535	2.61

* 1st Quarter

TABLE 2

COMPARATIVE DATA FOR STUDENTS WHO FIRST ENROLLED AT LIMA AND THEN ENROLLED AT COLUMBUS FOR AT LEAST TWO QUARTERS

Group	N	At Lima			At Columbus		
		Points	Hours	CPHR	Points	Hours	QPHR*
Autumn 1974	106	23,111	7,861	2.94	4,190	1,507	2.78
Autumn 1976	98	18,277	6,588	2.78	3,625	1,420	2.55
Autumn 1978	107	14,838	5,514	2.69	3,673	1,392	2.64
TOTALS	311	56,226	19,960	2.82	11,488	4,319	2.66

* 2nd Quarter

Lima campus cumulative point hour average. The single group which had the largest depression in the Columbus campus quarter point hour average was the group which matriculated in the Autumn Quarter of 1974. As a group their final Lima campus average was 2.90 and during their first quarters in Columbus the group average was 2.24.

Discussion

Brewer (1968) commented extensively on the differences between two-year college and four-year college studerts in terms of their performance on standardized college entrance tests. She observed that branch students, along with junior and community college students, tend to score lower on test such as the ACT. This in fact was the case in the early days of the Ohio State Universit·· operation in Lima. Throughout the 1970's, however, OSU Lima matriculants have tended to produce mean composite ACT scores very near the level of the students entering the Columbus campus. In six of the nine years between 1970 and 1979, OSU Lima students scored less than one standard score point lower than the comparable Columbus campus group (Table 3).

It will be recalled that the largest grade depression upon change of campus from OSU Lima to OSU Columbus occurred among the 1974 matriculants. Also it is interesting to note that these students come from a group which had a significantly larger ACT composite differential as compared with the Columbus campus matriculants of the same year (OSU Lima-19.58; OSU Columbus-(20.98). It is doubtful that this alone would create the grade depression upon transfer, but it could be a factor.

TABLE 3

COMPARISON OF ACT COMPOSITE SCORES
OSU COLUMBUS - OSU LIMA
1970 - 1979

Matriculation year/ ACT Mean Scores	Columbus	Lima	Difference
1970			
Mean ACT Comp. Score	22.26	21.05	(1.21)
Std. Dev.	4.71	4.65	
1971			
Mean ACT Comp. Score	21.41	20.14	(1.27)
Std. Dev.	5.28	5.00	
1972			
Mean ACT Comp. Score	21.27	19.70	(1.57)
Std. Dev.	5.54	5.10	
1973			
Mean ACT Comp. Score	21.06	21.03	(0.03)
Std. Dev.	5.57	4.69	
1974			
Mean ACT Comp. Score	20.96	19.58	(1.38)
Std. Dev.	5.54	5.29	
1975			
Mean ACT Comp. Score	20.73	20.07	(0.66)
Std. Dev.	5.46	5.13	
1976			
Mean ACT Comp. Score	20.49	19.96	(0.53)
Std. Dev.	5.60	5.31	
1977			
Mean ACT Comp. Score	20.48	19.64	(0.84)
Std. Dev.	5.60	5.34	
1978			
Mean ACT Comp. Score	20.42	19.83	(0.59)
Std. Dev.	5.58	5.04	
1979			
Mean ACT Comp. Score	20.45	19.90	(0.55)
Std. Dev.	5.51	5.08	

An investigation of ACT composite scores for students changing from OSU Lima to OSU Columbus reveals that the group mean tends to be between one and two score points higher than was the case for the group mean of the total entering group (Table 4). This also was true among the students who had changed campus between 1967 and 1969 (Zimmerman 1972). This suggests there is relationship between success on the ACT test and the likelihood that a student will continue studies at The Ohio State University.

TABLE 4

MEAN ACT COMPOSITE SCORES OF MATRICULANTS AND STUDENTS CHANGING CAMPUSES

Matriculation Year	MEAN ACT COMPOSITE SCORE	
	TOTAL GROUP	CAMPUS CHANGE GROUP
1974	19.58	21.55
1976	19.96	20.63
1978	19.83	21.31

Summary

Records of 331 former OSU Lima students were analyzed to determine the presence or absence of academic transfer shock following a change of enrollment from the campus to the central campus of the university. Autumn quarter matriculants of 1974, 1976, and 1978 were selected for the study. Findings were compared with those of earlier studies (Brewer, 1968 and Zimmerman, 1972).

A higher percentage of students changing to the Columbus campus tended to re-enroll for a second quarter on that campus than had been the case

earlier. There had been a 24 percent attrition rate observed in the 1972 study. Among the students represented in the 1981 study, only 8 percent failed to re-enroll on the central campus for a second quarter.

There appears to be a relationship between students' ACT scores and the presence of grade depression upon change of campus. Similiarly, the likelihood that students will change to and continue at the central campus also appears to have a positive relationship to their ACT composite scores.

Finally, while some grade depression was observed for matriculants of 1974, 1976, and 1978 who changed from OSU Lima to OSU Columbus, the difference is relatively slight. Only one group (Autumn 1974 matriculants) seemed to have performed academically in a way suggestive of transfer shock.

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